

SOCIALIST STUDIES

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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

**Communications to: General Secretary, 71 Ashbourne Court,
Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB**

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

GENERAL ELECTION 1997

MANIFESTO of THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Victory for the Tory or Labour Party at the coming Election will not alter the position of the vast majority of working men and women who form the electorate. Class society will remain unchanged, together with the institution of private property, which will continue to serve the interests of the rich and privileged minority. There are over 26 million wage workers in this country, men and women who have to sell their labour power for a wage or a salary. This vast army together with their dependants comprise the British working class. World-wide, the working class using nature-given materials, produces all the wealth of this country and all the others. In addition to producing their own wages, the working class also produces profit for the capitalist, and they produce the capitalists' capital.

The vast majority of workers support this system of wage labour, mainly in the mistaken belief that it can be administered in their interests, and that it will solve the problems of unemployment, job insecurity and deprivation in the areas of housing, health, education, etc. Since the turn of the century, promises by the major political parties to solve these problems have not been honoured. The problems are still with us due to the stifling anti-social economic laws of capitalism, which put profit before human needs.

Labour, Tory and Liberal have all had their share of government at various times. Each has taken on the job of administering capitalism, and has been supported by millions of workers. They have succeeded in running capitalism and ensuring that the capitalists' ownership of the means of production and distribution remains in place, together with the system of wage labour.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds the view that the capitalist system has run its course, and is now obsolete and antiquated. It is wasteful in the use of natural resources and social labour. It restricts the production of wealth to the dictates of the market, periodically leaving millions of workers unemployed. The system is saddled with a gigantic state bureaucracy. In addition to the armed forces, the police forces and the prison system, it requires a legal system and a welfare system, all of which are unproductive and devour wealth.

The capitalist system has to be abolished, and replaced with Socialism. Socialist society would organise wealth production on the basis of social and individual needs. There is no shortage of social labour to transform that wealth into useful articles and services, and other social necessities.

You can achieve Socialism by voting for it, but your vote must recognise that capitalism in its entirety has to be abolished. Capitalism continues due to the support given it by millions of workers, who see no alternative to a system based on production for sale with a view to profit. Socialist society will be based upon the common ownership (not nationalisation) and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution. Socialism will be a new social system. It has never been in existence in any part of the

world, including Russia, China, Cuba etc. It will be new and revolutionary, and open a new chapter in society's history.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain regrets that, owing to lack of resources, we are unable to put forward any candidates at this Election. However those wishing to express support for our point of view can write the words "Socialism" or "S.P.G.B." across their ballot papers. We urgently require your support, but only if you agree with our view that it is now time for a fundamental change in the way we live.

Consider the prospect of a future world where there is no war, no unemployment, no poverty, and no wage labour and where there is plenty for everybody! A world where each will make his or her contribution according to their abilities, and where each will take according to their needs!

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community

The above text is the statement of The Socialist Party of Great Britain distributed during the 1997 General Election. If you would like to help distribute this and other party literature, please contact the General Secretary.

NEW LABOUR'S COMMITMENT TO CAPITALISM

When the election was declared, the New Labour Party was delighted with the promise of support from Murdoch's Sun, Rothermere's Daily Mail and the Financial Times. All are now 'Blairite' papers. All previously supported the Tory Party, and none represent working class interests.

New Labour has nothing to offer workers. In recent years, the Labour Party has modernised itself out of all recognition. It's reformulated Clause 4 can no longer be read as meaning even Nationalisation or a Welfare State. "The new Clause 4 ... features capitalism - friendly phrases like - 'the enterprise of the market' and 'the rigour of competition'. (Socialist Studies No. 21). The Party's object is blatantly to serve the interests of Capital, not the interests of Labour.

The Blair concept of a 'stakeholder society' is one designed to deny the reality of the class struggle. The idea of a capitalist society as a single community with shared interests and shared values, an industrial partnership between employers and employed, exploiters and exploited, is an old propaganda ploy borrowed by New Labour from the Old Liberals.

In terms of policy, Blair and his colleagues are making very few promises to the electorate. But if elected they have made a clear decision that, for the next two years, Government spending would stay at - or below - the level decided by the Tories. That will inevitably entail no extra funds to improve social services and community care.

Moreover, New Labour in 1996 went back on their previous policy on state pensions, and followed the Tories in abandoning the link with the average wage. Pensioners and others dependent on state 'welfare' benefits, cannot expect any help from New Labour.

As for the unemployed, particularly the young, New Labour follows Big Business in distinguishing between the so-called deserving and the undeserving poor. Workers who become unemployed are usually made to feel a sense of stigma, shame, and a feeling that they are at fault - that the individual is to blame for being "idle". New Labour's policy of

workfare - forcing the unemployed to join training schemes is the latest in a long line of capitalist attempts to deal with the problem of unemployment by some form of deterrence. This stands in the face of Blair's rhetoric about "community" and "shared values".

Yet unemployment is not a matter of individual choice; it is an inevitable feature of the capitalist system of production for profit. The unemployed are a by-product of structural and cyclical changes in the economy. To endorse production for profit and the wages system is to endorse and support a system which condemns many capable workers to the bitterness and frustration of redundancy and life on the scrapheap. New Labour, like Old Labour has no magic wand to wave to end unemployment. No previous Labour government has been able to prevent unemployment from rising. Unemployment has always been higher when Labour left office than it was when it came in.

New Labour has to some extent distanced itself from the Trade Unions. Many Unions are advocating the adoption of a minimum wage, but New Labour, unlike the Tories, are in favour of this in principle, but are unwilling to commit themselves to a definite policy that might alarm their friends in the City. incidentally, the idea that a minimum wage could solve the problems of the very low-paid, while it seems attractive, is a non-starter. Employers and workers alike would find ways around a Government minimum wage policy just as they do with the Health and Safety at Work legislation. For the low-paid, an increase in their basic pay would be largely wiped out by cuts in their Housing and other welfare benefits. A minimum wage does not solve the problem of poverty.

In this election, the workers have a choice between capitalist parties with only slightly different policies. None of the main political parties are concerned first and foremost with the interests of the working class; those who have to sell their mental and physical abilities for wages, or who exist on meagre state benefits when unemployed, sick, disabled or too old to work. New labour has no intention of rocking the boat which explains why Murdoch, Rothermere and the Financial Times are happy to give this unprincipled party their seal of approval.

The media who represent Big Business use their influence and power in the interests of Big Business. It is high time that workers used their votes and their power to abolish capitalism. Before that can be done, the working class, here and abroad, must build up as a matter of urgency, the political movement for Socialism.

SOCIALISTS & THE EURO CURRENCY

The question of support or opposition to the introduction of a new common European currency, is totally irrelevant to wage and salary workers. It makes no difference to their position whether they are paid for their labour power in Pounds, Francs, Marks, Ecus, Euros, or any other currency dressed up in national or international uniform. The fact that the majority of the population is dependent upon the sale of labour power for wages or salaries is proof of the fact that society is divided into two social classes. Wage labour is an international institution recognising no national boundaries. On the one side are the capitalist class who own the means of living, land, factories, mines, transport etc., and on the other side are the working class, who are permitted (subject to realising a profit for the employers) to use these means of living in order to gain a living for themselves. In so doing they produce the profits which allow the employing class to live in a far superior manner to the workers. Profit also pays for the life styles of the armies of rich shareholders and landlords, and other sections of the privileged minority who identify as the capitalist class.

The proposed Euro currency is merely a replacement of the present means of exchange, based on the Pound, Franc, Mark etc., these being the existing means of circulation. The goods or services, i.e. the commodities, which form the subject of that exchange or circulation, are the property of the European capitalist class. In modern society, the workers own little outside of their ability to work, their labour power.

This is the present real situation, and any thinking working man or woman should remember this when confronted by the proposed referendum on the European currency. As far as the workers are concerned, any referendum would be an absolute farce, and can only be of concern to wealthy property groups and their political representatives, in Britain, the Tories, Labour, Liberal Democrat etc.

The present uncertainty and suspicion surrounding the campaign, is largely due to the fact that the members of the alleged European Community, do not trust each other. This is not surprising seeing that the participants are representatives of competing and often conflicting capitalist interests, each operating under the protection and jurisdiction of their separate national state governments. At present each government issues its own currency which has compulsory circulation, but only within the territorial area controlled by that government. This currency consists of paper tokens, inconvertible bank notes which in themselves have no value, but are backed up by public credit vested in the state, which declares them legal tender.

It is often forgotten that international transactions are mainly carried out in gold. Gold contains socially necessary labour (i.e. it has value), and it is used as the universal measure of value. From the capitalists' governments point of view, gold has the disadvantage that any convertible currency based on the gold standard cannot be inflated. Government debts cannot be discharged by printing excess paper currency, nor can money savings or pensions be reduced in value by inflating the currency, as now happens.

Under the single Euro currency proposals, the participating governments will lose their monopoly of issuing coins and bank notes within their national boundaries. This would apparently be done by a central European bank which, it is claimed, will operate independently from individual governments. Which will be the currency issuing bank, and how long it will remain free from political interference is one of the vexed questions. At present each government, because it has the monopoly of issuing its own currency, is able to control the general domestic price level, and influence interest rates. For example, since 1939 both Tory and Labour governments in this country have printed and circulated millions of pounds of excess paper currency, resulting in a corresponding and continuous increase in the general level of prices and the cost of living. The result has been that the price level since 1938 was some 30 times greater in 1996, because of the inflation of the currency.

Obviously, if a common single currency was adopted, individual governments would no longer be able to control the price level or influence interest rates, by inflating the currency for political purposes. However as the Euro currency would also consist of inconvertible paper tokens, backed by the public credit of the European Community, inflation could still take place under the collective control of the member states, all of which are past masters, particularly France and Germany, in debasing the currency by inflation.

Most of the comments on the single currency by politicians and economists have failed to clarify the issues involved. For example, in October 1996 (reported in **The Times**) a group of Labour MPs expressed their willingness to support the Euro currency, provided

that it did not cause unemployment. It has probably never occurred to them that the monetary system is the means of exchange, and exists for the purpose of circulating commodities which have previously been produced, of which capital transactions merely form a part. Unemployment, on the other hand, arises in the field of production which must precede circulation. Unemployment is the direct result of the employers action in deliberately laying off workers and curtailing production during adverse market conditions, when they are unable to make a profit. If the capitalist cannot sell the goods the workers have produced, he periodically stops or restricts their production by ceasing to employ a portion of the labour force. The cause of unemployment originates in the anarchic nature of capitalist production, not in the circulation of commodities.

Tinkering with the exchange mechanism by changing the price level by inflation or deflation of the currency, or by replacing the Pound by the Euro, will not alter the cause of unemployment, nor will it create employment.

The position of the SPGB differs fundamentally from all other political parties when examining the effect on the wage workers of the proposed new monetary system. How can it matter to the wage and salary earners, who constitute the European working class, whether the currency is based on the gold standard, the decimal standard or the new Euro standard? In capitalist society, the value of labour power, that wealth creating mental and physical energy of the worker, is determined in the same way as that of any other commodity: that is by the amount of socially necessary labour required for its production and reproduction. As with other commodities, wages (the price of labour power) will fluctuate

according to the market conditions. Broadly speaking, allowing for rises and falls in the market and the balance of the class struggle, the value of labour power is equal to the value of the goods and services, including an element of recreation, which workers need to consume and enjoy in order to keep themselves fit for the job they have been trained to do, and to reproduce a future working class in the shape of their children.

The focus of attention for workers should not be what currency their wages and salaries are paid in. Their focus should be on the exploitation inherent in the wages system, and the urgent need to replace capitalism with Socialism.

MY CREDO

From J. Ahrens, Vancouver, Canada

It is now possible for humankind to establish a sane system of society and solve the social problems of human exploitation, poverty, insecurity of life, and war, that has plagued us for so long. If we know how to read - choose the right authors and their books, learn what to do, and want to do it - nothing can stop humanity from blooming. Real democracy is not possible without real socialism, and socialism is not possible without real democracy. Both have never been tried.

It's merely a matter of gaining political control and transferring the means of life from private to social ownership, building a society that produces for use and not for profit, where every individual can contribute according to ability, and take according to need. Capitalism has a message, "*Replace it because it's had its day*".

THE ATTLEE LABOUR GOVERNMENT 1945 - 1951

In April 1997, with the prospect of Labour being elected as the next government, we take a historical look at how Labour has performed in the past.

The Labour government which entered office in 1945, after World War II, was not the first Labour government in this country but it differed importantly from its two predecessors. It was the first to have a clear majority of MPs in Parliament.

The first Labour government, which lasted for less than a year, in 1924, was very much a minority government. Its MPs numbered 191, against 258 Tories and 159 Liberals and it could only exist with Liberal support.

The second Labour government, 1929 -1931, had Labour as the largest of the three parties in Parliament but was still dependent on Liberal support, because the 288 Labour MPs were outnumbered by the combined strength of 260 Tories and 59 Liberals.

In the 1945 Parliament, the Labour Party had an overwhelming majority of MPs, 393 out of a total of 640, the Tories having 189. The Labour government could therefore easily out vote the combined strength of all the other parties. The Labour Party had a reduced majority after the 1950 General Election, and went out of office in 1951, when the Tories, under Churchill formed a minority government.

At the 1945 General Election, the Labour Party committed itself to a big programme of legislation, including widespread nationalisation, the National Insurance Act, and the National Health Service. It also pledged itself to maintain "full employment" and "good wages", and a more or less stable price level. In foreign policy the Labour Party promised support for the United Nations and disarmament, and it undertook to work to remove the threat of war. The election programme had a particular reference to America and Russia.

"We must consolidate in peace the great war-time association of the British Commonwealth with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Let it not be forgotten that in the years leading up to the war the Tories were so scared of Russia that they missed the chance to establish a partnership which might well have prevented the war."

The programme also had something to say about Socialism:

"The Labour Party is a Socialist Party and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain - free, democratic, progressive, public spirited, its material resources organised in the service of the British people".

How did its performance stand up to its promises? First the promise of Socialism. It was a piece of empty verbiage. If it had been true that the Labour Party stood for Socialism, it would have meant that the Labour Party would have been in total and permanent opposition to the Tory and Liberal parties. A true Socialist party would never have served along with the Tories and Liberals in the war time coalition governments, as did Labour. The real intention

of all Labour governments has not been to abolish capitalism, but to demonstrate that it can administer capitalism more successfully than could the other parties.

In 1929, the minister in charge of employment, Mr. J.H. Thomas, had admitted that he was seeking to reduce unemployment "*while accepting the present order of society*". (Unemployment jumped by a million.). Some forty years later it was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, speaking of the Labour government 1966-70, who said "*Never has any previous government done so much in so short a time to make modern capitalism work*"

(**The Times** 5th April 1967)

NATIONALISATION

Specifically, what the Labour Party means by "Socialism" is nationalisation, that is state capitalism. They liked to claim that this aim separates them from the Tories and Liberals, but the facts belie the claim. Long before the Labour Party came into being, there had been a long history of nationalisation by Tories and Liberals, including the postal, telegraph and telephone services, and the 1844 Tory government had legislation passed giving them the power to nationalise the railways. After World War I, Churchill and Lloyd George had campaigned for railway nationalisation. In 1943 during a broadcast, Churchill had said: "*There is a broadening field for state ownership and enterprise especially in relation to monopolies*". Churchill's concern about the "monopolies" had many precedents. In the 19th century, it had been both Tory and Liberal policy that the way to deal with over powerful monopolies was to nationalise them. Now that policy has been abandoned and "New" Labour under Tony Blair favours the present Tory policy of

using anti-monopoly laws against monopolies along the lines of the policy as used in America.

WAR & WELFARE

In the field of disarmament and war, the 1945 Labour government's hopes intentions came to nothing. Along with America the Labour government got involved in the "cold war" and the Korean war. In 1950, the Labour government, fearful of the supposed threat from Russia to over-run Western Europe, launched its great rearmament programme. The government's "defence expenditure" jumped from £770 million in 1948 to £1,110 million. It was also the Labour government who started the development of the British atomic bomb programme secretly, and they who introduced peace time conscription into the armed forces.

The Labour Party often claims to deserve the credit for the National Insurance scheme and the National Health Service, but these were both commitments of the war time coalition government. It was that government which, in 1941, appointed Lord Beveridge (a Liberal) to examine and report on the introduction of these schemes, and it was the same government which in 1944, published the first proposals for a comprehensive National Health Service. The Labour government had intended that scheme to provide "free" treatment, but by 1951 it had introduced charges for dentures and spectacles, a policy carried further by later governments.

UNEMPLOYMENT

A boast made at the time, and still being made, was that it was due to Labour government policy that unemployment in the years 1945-1951 was very low, and averaged under 2 per cent for the whole six years, compared with say the 13 per cent in 1985. However in the

following six years, 1951- 1956, under a Tory government, it was even lower, an average of just over 1.5 per cent. In neither case was it due to government policy.

One factor in the low level of unemployment was the backlog of work left after the war, in such fields as housing and factory building. Provided that British industry could get raw materials and fuel supplies, there was a big market for British exports. Getting these raw materials and fuel supplies was greatly helped by the hundreds of millions of pounds received from the American government under Marshall Aid. A minister in the Labour government, Mr. Aneurin Bevan, stated in 1948, that "*without Marshall Aid unemployment in this country would at once rise by 1,500,000.*" That is to say it would have been at depression level, as indeed it was at that time in several countries including Italy, Germany and Belgium.

Another factor in the relatively low employment in Britain was that British exports of manufactured goods had a particular and temporary advantage because some other countries were effectively out of the world market because of war time destruction of their factories, in particular Japan and Germany.

The British percentage of total world export of Manufactures, which in 1900 had been 33 per cent and had steadily fallen to 21 per cent in 1938, received this special boost and jumped in 1948 to 29 per cent, with the consequent help in keeping unemployment low. As Japan and Germany came back into the world market with their fiercely competitive manufactured commodities, the British percentage of the total export of manufacturing steadily declined again and British unemployment went on a continuous upward trend until the early 1990's.

The policy of "full employment" was one to which all three coalition parties, Tories Labour and Liberals, had been committed by the government **White Paper Employment Policy** in 1944. It pledged all post war governments, whatever their political complexion, to maintain "full employment" by the use of Keynesian techniques of so called "demand management". A policy based on economic fallacies which has never worked. A later Labour government under Mr. Callaghan, (with Mr. Healey as Chancellor), faced with rising unemployment, declared its abandonment of Keynes' policy in 1977 and the adoption of its idiot twin called "monetarism", which was continued by Mrs. Thatcher's government and by Mr. Major.

PRICES AND WAGES

The 1945 Labour government was committed to maintain a more or less stable price level. In practice prices went up by 33 per cent between 1945 and 1951. The Labour government's debasement of the currency led in 1949 to the devaluation of the Pound from \$4 00 to \$2.80, something not to be found in their manifesto and something which the government declared for several months it had no intention of doing. Under the Tories, equally committed to stable prices, they went up by another 25 per cent in the next six years 1951- 1956, an they have continued to rise under every subsequent government, including the present one.

In practice the 1945 Labour government's aim to provide "good wages", took the form of trying to hold down wages in the first of many "income policies" introduced by Attlee's government in 1947. The fact that Attlee's government used troops to try to break the dockers' strike, "in the national interest" shocked many working class Labour supporters. Socialist were not shocked, knowing that

the job of any government is to administer capitalism expediently. Looking back on the 1945 Labour government, what in fact did it achieve? It carried through a lot of nationalisation measures, but what about the accompanying promise that nationalisation would improve the workers' conditions, and reduce the number of strikes? Nationalisation has done nothing for the working class, workers in nationalised industries found time and time again that only by threatening to strike or actually striking could they obtain increases in wages. In this respect they were (are) no better off than workers in other industries.

The so called "Welfare State" which was supposed to abolish poverty has totally failed to do so. The abolition of poverty under the capitalist system is impossible. The capitalist politicians can only argue about the proportion of the "national" wealth which can be allocated for welfare *within the confines of overall profitability*.

The 1945 Labour government, like its two predecessors, and the Labour governments which have followed, did nothing to change the basic structure of capitalism or remedy the evils flowing from it. The major task of the working class world wide remains as it was before the Labour Party was even formed, that of abolishing capitalism and establishing Socialism.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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has no connection with any other political party including the party using the same name at 52 Clapham High Street London SW4. Persons wishing to send donations, subscriptions etc. should make cheques etc. payable to **Socialist Studies**, at Ashbourne Court.

SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA, EMOTION OR REASON?

Do we have to make the working class indignant in order to make socialists? Should our propaganda be emotional, charged with fury, or should it be well reasoned? Are the two approaches mutually exclusive?

According to the **Shorter Oxford English Dictionary**, the word "indignant" means to be "*influenced at once with anger and disdain*". Should socialists make such an emotional appeal to the working class? Must socialists emulate capitalist politics by crude emotional allurements? Is a socialist revolution impossible without first an emotional upsurge of feeling?

R.H. Caves in the **Socialist Viewpoint** (March/April 1981) considered the question of the presentation of socialist ideas to the working class, and the consequences of the way it is presented:

"...when it (socialist ideas) penetrates to the consciousness of a large majority of workers that society places little or no value on their existence, they must either destroy the monster in their anger - or refashion it out of reason."

Unfortunately he did not indicate what would replace capitalism if the working class destroyed it in their anger.

Capitalism is a society based on the social production of wealth within the framework of private property ownership. The means of

production are owned by a minority class of employers to the exclusion of the rest of society. What workers produce during production is taken away from them by employers to be sold on the market to realise a profit. During the production process, workers are exploited by producing more social wealth than they receive in wages or salaries.

To bring about a socialist revolution, where society's wealth will be commonly owned and democratically controlled and based upon the principle from each according to his ability, to each according to his need, it is absolutely vital that the majority of the working class understand capitalism. They must understand their class position within capitalism and they must understand the need to take political action to replace capitalism with Socialism. The working class has to recognise that it is a subject class whose problems, like unemployment, flow from commodity production and class relations. The majority of the workers also have to recognise that it is they and only they who can establish Socialism. No one else can do it for them. Socialism can only be established by a socialist majority actively understanding and desiring Socialism. It cannot happen by accident. Knowledge of Socialism and socialist ideas is the necessary starting point to freedom from class oppression and exploitation.

A purely emotional appeal has the dangers that Caves recognised. Emotional appeal could make the conditions of capitalism more chaotic through anger, violence and disruption to production. Obviously such chaos has an appeal to the anarchists like Class War and organisations like the Socialist Workers Party. They struggle for conditions of chaos. Socialists, however, must avoid the confusion spread by emotional rhetoric and the despair born of

disappointed hopes, that are responsible for the indifference of workers to the socialist case. This is not to recognise that in any class divided social system, there will always be signs of unrest and discontent by the underprivileged as they struggle against class oppression.

Today capitalism exists throughout the world. Capitalism is based on the ownership of the means of life by a small minority with the vast majority forced to work for them. Workers produce the wealth on which this small parasitic minority lives in ease and comfort without the need to work. For the majority it spells a life of unpredictability and insecurity, a constant struggle to make ends meet, and so it is little wonder that discontent is more or less a permanent feature of their existence.

We must not ignore this discontent - it shows workers are groping for an answer to the problems they face as a class. But it is not more indignation or discontent that is required. Our problem as socialists is how to overcome the lack of understanding of capitalism and class relations by the working class through reasoned argument. The workers' cries of protest take on a negative form of expression: against wage cuts, unemployment, ill health caused by work and many other issues affecting their lives. They do not realise that these problems are part of the bigger problem - capitalism itself, and that these social problems cannot be dealt with in isolation. To explain capitalism requires reason and patience. It is a slow demanding process. It is not easy, but then no struggle ever is.

At all times socialists must put forward the positive case for a new world of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

MARX & ENGELS ON THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can be made only in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and their material conditions of life, including those which they find already in existence and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be established in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. The first fact to be established, therefore, is the physical constitution of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of Nature. Of course we cannot here investigate the actual physical nature of man or the natural conditions in which man finds himself - geological, oro-hydrographical, climatic and so on. All this historiography must begin from these natural bases and their modifications in the course of history by men's activity.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or by anything one likes. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is determined by their physical constitution. In producing their means of subsistence men indirectly produce their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends in the first place on the nature of the existing means which they have to produce. This mode of production should not be regarded simply as the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. It is

already a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite way of expressing their life, a definite mode of life. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, with what they produce and how they produce it. What individuals are therefore, depends on the material conditions of their production.

(**German Ideology**, Marx/Engels, Gesamtausgabe 1/5 p 10-11)

...we must begin by stating the first presupposition of all human existence, and therefore of all history, namely, that men must be in the position to live in order to 'make history'. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing, and many other things. The first historical act is, therefore, the production of material life itself. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must be accomplished every day and every hour in order to sustain human life...In any conception of history, therefore, the first requirement is to observe this basic fact in all its significance and all its implications and to give it its proper importance... The second point is that as soon as it is satisfied, the first need itself, the action of satisfying and the instrument which has achieved this satisfaction, leads to new needs - and this production of new needs is the first historical act.

(Ibid, Mega 1/5 pp 17-18)

FURTHER LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Socialist Studies - our official journal

Issues Nos: 1 - 22 @ 50p each

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meets at 7.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Mondays in month at
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Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1

Correspondence to the Secretary, S.P.G.B., 31 Caernarvon Road,
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Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities
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